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IL AND CROP IMPROVEMENT ASSOCIATION

Conference

Devoted to Improving Ontario's Crops

LAND USE CONFERENCE

DECEMBER 12—13
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Proceedings

PRESENT PLANNING AT THE PROVINCIAL LEVEL

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PLANNING AT THE PROVINCIAL LEVEL

- S. J. Clasky

INTRODUCTION

Before I begin talking to you about the Provincial planning program, I should like to congratulate the Ontario Soil and Crop Improvement Association for hosting this Land Use Conference entitled "Planning for the Future". I am sure there is no doubt in the mind of anyone in this room, that we must prepare for the changes in our life-style that is taking place in Ontario. These changes are due to the basic trends in our society -- we will experience some growth between now and the year 2000, expressed in increases in population, and in real income; as well, our scale of values is undergoing a constant re-assessment, and some things we will demand of society in the future (such as clean air and water) were not high priorities in the past.

However, at the moment, it seems that almost everyone is planning within his own terms of reference and with too little regard for what other individuals, agencies or governments need or want. I think that the major role of the Government of Ontario in "Planning for the Future" is to establish planning guidelines for the province as a whole and for its regions so that municipalities, business, industry, individuals, etc., can

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properly plan their future for the overall good of the people of Ontario. The Regional Development Program is the main vehicle by which provincial policy can be applied regionally.

Perhaps such a function sounds a little grand. I am the first to admit that it is not an easy task. However, I think it is a most worthwhile one, and one that the Government has set about with the utmost sincerity. Let me, then, outline the Design for Development program in general, and try and illustrate the way it works in practice. First, however, let me point out that there is a hierarchy of planning -- provincial, regional and municipal -- in which each of the lower levels must conform with the objectives of levels above it. For example, the Province will set broad guidelines for development in a region, and all municipalities will have to ensure that their plans conform to those guidelines.

THE DESIGN FOR DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

The Regional Development has been defined as adapting to change in the best possible way. I think that is quite a succinct explanation -- we are not about to attempt to turn the tide, but we are trying to encourage each region of the province to achieve its full social and economic potential, in harmony

with the development of the province as a whole. The basic aims of the program are to enhance the quality of life for the people of Ontario, to encourage private enterprise to prosper within a healthy and balanced community, to improve the effectiveness of provincial services in each region and to conserve our natural resources, including agricultural land, for the benefit of all the people of the province. An important part of this is the improvement in both the efficiency and effectiveness of all Provincial Government Services. Thus, the Design for Development program affects, and is affected by, the activities of all our Ministries.

Unlike the programs of other Ministries, however, the Regional Development Program focusses its attention on specific geographic areas of the province and considers the impact of all Government programs on these areas. In this way, we can address ourselves to the multitude of interrelated, but widely different problems, such as industrial and commercial development, housing, transportation, land use, recreation access and pollution control, that arise in the various parts of the province. To alleviate these problems, or better still, to eliminate them, planning policies suitable to each region, but compatible with overall provincial goals, must be determined.

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It is an ambitious program, but the Ontario Government is committed to the co-ordination and direction of programs and expenditures on a regional basis, through regional plans. It is recognized as a key program, the success of which will determine whether or not Ontario will achieve the level and quality of living that is desired both for individuals and for society as a whole.

How, then, do we go about the preparation of a regional plan? A good plan must be preceded by a thorough consideration of problems and alternative solutions to problems. In all Regions, we have studied social and economic characteristics and regional transportation and urban systems, and we have looked at local government structures. From this, we have identified the problems and issues faced by each region and noted their individual potentials. We have illustrated the range of development possibilities for these regions -- from dispersion to concentration -- and have offered alternatives to the public, as a basis for discussion.

Since April of this year, we have released phase one reports for five regions in Ontario -- the Lake Erie, Lake Ontario, St. Clair, Georgian Bay and Eastern Ontario regions. That completes the first step in the regional planning process.

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What we are doing, however, is more than a theoretical exercise, and local input is an essential ingredient. The residents of each of the regions must have the opportunity to discuss development alternatives and submit comments and criticisms in order that the plan can reflect regional as well as provincial goals, recognizing that the interests of the individual are not necessarily those of the community at large.

Public meetings have been held in all regions and I must say I am extremely pleased with the level of citizen participation. Attendance at these meetings has varied but on the whole has been good and there appears to have been a free exchange of views and opinions. Such debate is essential to making the regional plans a reflection of local wishes. In addition, we are continually receiving well thought out written submissions.

Along with these expressions of local needs and aspirations goes further study by the research people in the Regional Development Branch, working closely with other ministries. The outcome will be a recommended proposal for the future development of each region. This step will again be followed by public discussions in all regions.

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Our experience has led to two major modifications in the program. Since the mid-fifties, Ontario has been divided into ten economic regions, used primarily for data-gathering and analysis. These areas, however, are not appropriate for planning. The sphere of influence of the major centres in these regions and the basic socio-economic linkages go well beyond their boundaries. Consequently, we are now moving into five large planning regions -- Southwest, Central, Southeast, Northwest and Northeast. Within each of these five regions a planning framework can be established to guide growth and change for the foreseeable future.

We have also recognized the need to improve the system through which we formally receive advice, comment and criticism from the regions. We will be establishing two advisory bodies in each of the five regions. One will be made up of representatives of the major municipalities in the Region -- Cities, Counties and Regions. The other will represent the interests of the private sector such as business, industry, labour and agriculture. We will ask these bodies not only to react to our proposals but to initiate recommendations with respect to their own regions and advise us at every stage of our program.

THE REGIONAL PLANS

You may ask what these regional plans will be like, what they will do. Within overall provincial guidelines, they will seek to achieve a pattern of development which will provide the best possible social and economic life for the people living there, protect the environment and provide an attractive climate for private investment. Each will attempt to determine the best pattern of growth for its region by identifying places which have potential for urban-oriented growth and indicating the most appropriate types of economic activity in both the urban and rural parts of the region. Growth will thus be structured to ensure that all the resources of the region will be developed to the benefit of the region and of the province, not just now but in the future.

No region is self-sufficient and all rely to varying degrees on the production of jobs and services by and for other regions of the province, other parts of Canada and indeed, the rest of the world. Our ability to compete in these markets is crucial and is a major determinant of the level of well-being we are able to achieve.

In essence, the Provincial plans will set down a system of regional structures -- the distribution of population

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and jobs within regions, broad land use patterns, general development policies, and major servicing and transportation networks. The plans will reflect evolving government policies on such matters as conservation, urban transportation, allocation of housing, etc. The Ontario regional plans will detail the pattern of development only so far as is necessary to ensure that the objectives of provincial planning are achieved. Plans issued under this program will be concerned with overall development. They will aim for an integrated structure of cities and services, and are intended to guide growth where it is most desirable. They will not be local land use plans.

The plans will also indicate the measures that will be needed to implement them. These will run the whole range from policies to carefully structure growth to those for stimulating and assisting growth.

Within this overall framework, the municipalities are, of course, expected to do their own local planning. Local plans will indicate specific land use strategies and the location of all services and transportation routes for which they are responsible. Where local plans are not consistent with the Provincial plan, revisions will be necessary. This is not to say that it is always the local plan that must change -- where

there are conflicts, a mutually acceptable solution will be attempted. But, in the long run, key Provincial objectives must prevail.

Although the detailed controls for development -- zoning by-laws and subdivision control -- are local in nature, there are direct measures that can be taken by the Province to ensure that the aims of the regional plan are carried out. For example, services -- transportation, water and sewage systems -- all affect the pattern of development, and the Province could elect to service only the development that is in keeping with the Provincial plan. Financial incentives can be used to encourage development in selected locations. The Government itself can locate new institutions and offices to fit in with the plan. Another point I would like to mention is that the very fact that a policy has been stated, tends to change development patterns. This has already occurred in the Toronto-Centred Region.

It is recognized that there is a need to complete the provincial regional plans as soon as possible to provide the necessary guidelines and to develop the organization and procedures for its implementation -- including, of course, the various forms of financial assistance which will be required.

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TORONTO-CENTRED REGION PLAN

In terms of our overall priorities in the Design for Development program, we have concentrated, and without apology, on the Toronto-Centred Region, for it is the area under the greatest pressure for growth. In addition, development and planning decisions made by the government and the private sector in this Region affect the largest number of people in Ontario.

The first phase in the planning process for the Toronto-Centred Region was really included in the Metropolitan Toronto and Region Transportation Study carried out in the mid-1960's. That is one reason we have been able to advance farther in our planning for TCR than for any other region. (Only Northwestern Ontario has a Phase 2 report containing policy recommendations.)

In May 1970, we issued the first Design for Development report on the Toronto-Centred Region. This was followed by a Status Report in August 1971 which accepted as Government policy the basic principles and objectives set out in the earlier report. The Status Report clarified a number of questions, but not all by any means. The concept is being refined and public statements will be made periodically to outline government policies and proposals on various major components of the plan.

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These statements will, hopefully, encourage discussion by the public. This is essential to the eventual development of a workable plan.

The concept as it now stands is already being used by the Government of Ontario as a basis for decision-making. It is being used, for example, as a reference point against which to test and consider Official Plans and subdivision proposals. Another, and somewhat different, example is the inter-ministry task force which has been set up to look at the idea of a Parkway Belt -- its purpose, its alignment and the means of implementing it -- and report to the Government. Another recent example of action in the Toronto-Centred Region has been the adoption in principle by the Government of the key recommendations in the Niagara Escarpment - or Gertler - Report. To help implement this program of Escarpment preservation, a Task Force has been established to consider special land-use policies for the Escarpment. This Task Force has now reported to the Government, and its recommendations will be made public shortly.

The process of refining the Toronto-Centred Region concept -- detailing land uses, population allocations, urban structure, etc. -- is necessarily a slow one. There is much to

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be done and many people and agencies to consult. To assist us in one aspect of the process, we have established Provincial-Municipal Task Forces in the two areas of recommended growth -- Port Hope/Cobourg to the east, and Simcoe/Georgian Bay to the north. These bodies, a political committee and a technical committee in each area, will advise the Government on the best ways in which their own area should develop.

One of the biggest questions we are trying to answer, not only in the Toronto-Centred Region but in the other regions as well, is that of implementation. In seeking for answers to this question, we must look at the other two sides of the planning triangle -- local government reform and provincial-municipal fiscal reform. The first side, of course, is the regional development program. Each of the three areas of policy is important in its own right, but each is an important link or complement to the success of each of the others.

I do not have time now to outline the administrative procedures whereby our regional plans are developed and means for implementation are chosen. I will merely point out that the responsibility for this program rests not solely with the Ministry of Treasury, Economics and Intergovernmental Affairs, but is the responsibility of all Ministries within the Provincial

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Government. For example, the most important group to which the program reports is the Advisory Committee on Urban and Regional Planning, consisting of the Deputy Ministers of the major Ministries. Mr. Everett Biggs, Deputy Minister of the Environment, is an important and valued member of our Advisory Committee, as is Mr. Dick Hilliard, Deputy Minister of Agriculture and Food.

What basic lessons can we learn from the Province's growing commitment to regional planning? These lessons can be framed in a series of points which raise many of the fundamental issues for which we are now seeking answers. For example:

- changes are required in existing planning legislation to reflect this growing provincial role. The predominance of provincial planning must be built into law. Also, it may be necessary to make planning compulsory at the municipal level -- and to make all approved official plans binding on all parties -- municipal, private, and provincial.
- who should bear the financial cost of restricting development in certain areas? For example, in Zone 2 of the Toronto-Centred Region only limited urbanization

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is being permitted. This means that the sale of farmland and other open spaces for urban development is very limited. Should these limitations -- which affect the resale value of land, and the financial base of municipalities -- be recognized in tax legislation and in our municipal grant system? This is very likely.

- if we concentrate most of our new urban growth in selected centres, in order to maximize our investment in urbanization, this will mean that many communities will probably stagnate, or even wither away. Are we prepared to pay this price for economic efficiency, or are we wealthy enough, as a society, to pay the additional cost of preserving many smaller communities because we value the contribution they make to our way of life?
- what should be the regional planning objectives in the field of agriculture? Should we encourage specialization and larger farm units to make agriculture more efficient, or is this meaningless without federal and provincial programs for more rational marketing and the lessening of foreign competition? In other words, how limited is regional planning when faced with an agriculture industry directly affected by national and international trends.

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While I cannot offer answers to these and other basic issues, I can say this: within its limitations, the provincial regional planning program is dedicated to finding the regional strategy which will best exemplify our objective of encouraging each region to reach the fullest potential of which it is capable.

CONCLUSION

This has been a somewhat sketchy account of a rather complicated program. However, as your conference points out, we must participate in "Planning for the Future". I am proud to be part of the Provincial planning process which I believe must lead the way and provide the framework for planning at all levels throughout Ontario.

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